(b) whether it is a fact that the wholesale price seems to be moving towards Rs. 30 per kilogram from the present Rs. 23 per kilogram and the retail price may soon reach Rs. 40 per kilogram according to the Delhi Grain Merchant Association; and

(c) if so, what steps Government has taken so far to check the price hike which is hurting the common man including fixing a limit for traders not to store more than required sugar?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) and (b) A new report appeared in 'The Hindustan Times' dated 30.04.2009 under the caption 'Sugar becomes bitterly costly' in which it was reported that price of 1 kg. of sugar has risen to over Rs. 35 at retail counters across the capital. Quoting from one Shri Vijay Prakash of the Delhi Grain Merchant Association, it was reported that "even wholesale prices seem to be moving towards Rs. 30 per kg. from the present Rs. 23 per kg. So, retail price may soon go past Rs. 40 per kg." The Government immediately, issued a Press Release dated 30.04.2009 contradicting the news report and clarifying that the retail prices of loose sugar in Delhi during the month of April, 2009 have never exceeded Rs. 28 per kg. The Central Government had taken a number of steps to augment the availability of sugar in the country, as such, there is hardly any possibility of retail prices touching Rs. 40 per kg.

(c) The Central Government has taken a slew of measures to check the price hike as indicated below:-

(i) The stock-holding and turnover limits on sugar have been imposed *vide* Notifications dated 09.03.2009 and 12.03.2009 for a period of four months *i.e.* upto 08.07.2009. The Government has recently decided to extend these limits by another six months, *i.e.*, upto 08.01.2010;

(ii) Additional release of non-levy sugar quota were given during the quarter April-June, 2009

(iii) Futures trading in sugar on NCDEX has since been suspended to check speculative tendencies in sugar trade with effect from 27th May, 2009.

Apart from the above, the Central Government has also taken steps to augment sugar stocks by permitting import of raw sugar by sugar mills, and one million ton of white/refined sugar by designated agencies, at zero customs duty for a specified period.

Introduction of smart card or food coupons

178. SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government proposes to introduce smart cards or food coupons for the poor to buy foodgrains from any outlet in the country at reduced prices;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) to (c) In order to make delivery of services efficient under TPDS and to access replicability of use of smart cards for this purpose, Govt. has approved in December, 2008 implementation of a pilot scheme of smart cards based TPDS in Chandigarh and Haryana. Under it, eligible BPL families would be issued smart cards in place of existing ration cards. They will have biometric features of the family members, based on which verification of genuineness of the BPL families will take place and thereafter only the essential commodities would be issued to them from the fair price shops.

For commencing implementation of this scheme, work is in progress by the implementing agencies *i.e.* Govt. of Haryana, Chandigarh UT Administration and National Informatics Centre.

Supply of rice and wheat to BPL families at Rs. 3 per kilogram

179. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL:
SHRI DARA SINGH:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is planning to supply rice and wheat to BPL families at Rs. 3 per kg. during the next financial year;

(b) if so, what would be the total outflow of funds during the years 2009-10 and 2010-11 year-wise for this purpose; and

(c) how Government proposes to supply rice and wheat to needy persons as well as to ensure that black marketing/misuse would not take place otherwise the rice and wheat may not reach the needy persons?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) to (c) As per the President's Address to Parliament on 4th June, 2009, the Government proposes to enact National Food Security Act to provide for assured food security for all citizens and to make entitled, by law, every family below the poverty line in rural and urban areas to 25 kgs. of rice or wheat per month @ Rs.3 per kg.

In order to frame the proposed law, Government has initiated necessary action. Examination of different aspects of the proposed law in consultation with State Governments, various Central Ministries, experts and other stake holders is presently in progress.

Presently, under the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) allocation of food grains @ 35 kg per family per month is made for 6.52 crore Below Poverty Line (BPL) (including the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) families on the basis of 1993-94 poverty estimates of the Planning Commission projected on the population estimates of Registrar General of India as on 1.3.2000 and for 7.4 lakh families in the KBK districts in Orissa.